

he referred to Dr. Edgar Ratcliffe (Andy) Anderson, executive vice president, American Medical Association.

**Remarks to the National Campaign
Against Youth Violence Luncheon**
September 14, 2000

Thank you. Let me, first of all, say I'm glad you're here, and I'm glad that all of you who have made contributions to this endeavor to make sure it succeeds. I came by, overwhelmingly, just to say thanks, and a special word of thanks to you, Jeff, for taking this on when it would have been easy to take a pass, and to you, Steve, for taking this on when it would have been easy to take some more established way of being philanthropic and civic, with a more guaranteed but a much more limited return. I guess AOL didn't get where it is by looking for guaranteed but limited returns. *[Laughter]* So I thank you very much. *[Laughter]*

I'm almost done being President, and so I'm thinking a little bit not so much about the past but about why I and my administration did certain things when we did them and why I thought this was worth trying to do.

And one thing is, I really believe that ideas and dreams have consequences. If you have a bad one and you implement it in the most aggressive way, it still won't have a good outcome. And if you have a good one but you don't implement it very well, you won't have a very good outcome. But if you have a good one and you do it, you do everything you can to realize it in a smart way, it has results.

And I think that one of the things Presidents are supposed to do is to imagine things that everybody wants but is afraid to say out loud they might do. I always thought we could balance the budget. And then once we did, I realized we ought to say we could make America debt-free. If I had said any of that in 1992, people would have said, "You know, he seems like a very nice person, but we really should"—*[laughter]*—"have somebody who's a little more well-grounded."

And that brings me to this issue. This is a good news/bad news story. The good news is, crime is down 7 years in a row, violent crime at a 27-year low; juvenile crime has

been dropping after going up, and juvenile violence has been dropping, after going up for many years. The bad news is, we still have the highest rate of violence committed by and committed against young people of any industrialized nation.

So anybody who's satisfied with the trend, I think, is wrong. But we should be encouraged and empowered by the trends, because it shows we can do better. But just like we had to start out when we had a deficit of \$290 billion a year and we'd quadrupled the debt in 12 years, we had to first of all say, "Well, we're going to cut in a half in a certain number of years, and then we'll get rid of it." And then we realized we could get rid of it, so we said, "Well, why don't we go after the debt, too, and keep interest rates down and keep the economy going?"

Well, now, it's not like we don't know what to do here. And it's not like we don't know what works. And we've got all this evidence. So I think our goal should be to make America the safest big country in the world and the safest big place in the world for a child to grow up and live. That should be our goal.

Now, if that's our goal, the first thing we've got to do is, do what Steve says, and get everybody involved from all sectors of society. And the second thing we have to do is, do what Jeff said; we have to have a strategy. And the strategy he outlined, you know, to educate, replicate—or whatever word he used—and generate leadership—*[laughter]*—that's about as good as it gets. *[Laughter]* How did I do? Did I do pretty good?

So what I'd like to do, just briefly review what's been done that I have some notes on to say thanks and then talk about where we go from here. Because I want you to know, I wouldn't have asked you to do this if I didn't think you could make a big difference.

We had a meeting like this a few years ago on teen pregnancy and got a lot of people together, and the committee just took off with it. And teen pregnancy's dropped dramatically. Now, did that committee do it all? No. Were there economic and other factors that helped? Of course. Did they make a big difference? You bet.

We started a few years ago with five people in a room to have a Welfare to Work Partnership to try to prove that the welfare reform

bill could work. And now, we've got 12,000 companies in that partnership, and they've hired hundreds of thousands of people off the welfare rolls. They have very good retention rates. They're making wages way above the minimum wage. They're doing very well. The welfare rolls are half of what they were when I took office. Did those 12,000 companies do that by themselves? No. Did the welfare reform law alone do it? No. The economy had a lot to do with it. Every one of you, if you never hired anybody off welfare, if you increased your own employment, made a contribution to creating an economy which reduced the welfare rolls. But did those 12,000 companies make a difference? You bet they did. And that enabled us to have the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years.

So that's how you need to look at this. If the economy went into a basket, would it be harder for you to succeed at this? Of course. And if Government had stupid policies, would it be harder for you to see? Yes. And if we pass our after-school initiative and more than double the number of kids that can be in after-school programs, will it be easier for you to see? You bet.

But can you make a decisive difference in making America the safest big country in the world? Absolutely, because this is the only group that's focusing on everything in trying to come up with a strategy specifically directed at this issue. And that's the way I think you need to look at this.

But you ought to always have in your mind that you are laboring to make your country the safest big country in the world and the safest, big, complicated society in the world for a little child to grow up in. Nothing else is worth dreaming of. And when you think about that, it helps to organize everything that you do. And when you don't impose on yourself the burden of being fully responsible for the success or failure of the endeavor but asking yourself where you can add at the margins to make it a real success to reach the ultimate goal, and how in a big society like ours, nothing ever gets done as well as it can be done unless there is a group of people like this that represent everybody in a society, doing this in partnership, then it ought to be highly energizing for you, and I hope you will continue to do it.

First, I want to thank you for the public service announcements. I want to thank ABC, NBC, AOL, Univision, LearningGate, the NFL, anybody else that would care to do it. Anybody who tells you they don't work is crazy. Why do you think politicians are spending all this much money advertising in an election year? *[Laughter]* If you don't think they work, why doesn't everybody just abolish their advertising budget?

It does work. It makes a huge difference. Ask Barry McCaffrey the role it has played in our efforts to reduce drug abuse among young people. So it does.

I want to say a special word of thanks to Bob Silberman for his leadership in this concert that's being introduced this fall. Those guys have produced one or two concerts, and I think it ought to be pretty great, and I hope I can see it unfold.

I want to thank Ronnie Coleman, the U.S. attorney from Memphis, and Ira Lipman from Guardsmark for their leadership and the remarkable things that have occurred in Memphis in such a few short months in implementing their city-by-city initiative.

I want to thank Francine Katz and Anheuser-Busch for helping to make similar things happen in St. Louis. Those are two cities that I know quite well from long before I ever thought I'd be sitting here doing this—standing here doing this.

I want to thank AOL for the work that it's doing in our schools. And I want to thank Tommy Hilfiger, Teen People, and Time-Warner for helping with all the things that are going to be done to connect young people to one another, the parades, the concerts, the assemblies, the television summits.

And finally, I would like to thank the Director of my White House Council on Youth Violence, Sonia Chessen, for leading our Federal efforts, and Assistant Surgeon General Susan Blumenthal over here for her dedication. We're doing everything that we can.

And I want to say one thing about what Steve said about the entertainment industry. There are two realities here, and both of them ought to get out there. First of all, the entertainment industry, in the last 8 years—I went to Hollywood the first time and asked

them to help us deal with violence and inappropriate exposure to material to young children in December of 1993 in a big deal that we had at CAA. We had hundreds of people there. I said, "Look, you've got to help us on this. This is a problem. Don't be an ostrich. Don't deny this. Let's just figure out how to do this."

And I would just like to say since then, we have seen remarkable efforts at content rating systems for television, for video games, Internet parental controls. This year all new televisions will be sold with a V-chip.

Now, as Hillary reminds me all the time, that since we have separate rating systems, it's hard to make sense of them all, and it would be nice if we had some way of kind of integrating them all. But it's not like nothing's happened here. Some good things have happened, and some real efforts have been made.

Now, what's the problem? As I said the other day, this FTC study is very disturbing, because it says some of the people who are making movies and other material rate them and say kids shouldn't look at them and then market it to the very people they say shouldn't be looking at it.

And the movie business is something I understand the economics of a little bit more, and one real problem of the movie business is, less than 10 percent of the movies make money in the theaters when they're first shown. So you wind up with a situation where people are making these movies imagining, "How am I going to package them when they're in the video stores? How can I sell it to one of these cable networks that will show it at 3 o'clock in the morning, three weekends in a row? Will there be a foreign market for this sort of thing?"

How does all this affect what they do? It doesn't justify it. I'm not saying that. I'm just trying to explain the fact that what I think we have to do is to take Steve up on his offer and implore—I can understand why the media executives didn't want to go to that congressional hearing yesterday and just get beat up on. But on the other hand, I don't think anybody should run away from this. I think they ought to say, "Look, here's where we were 8 or 10 years ago. Here's where we are now. Here's the progress we've made.

Okay, so, this is being done, and it's wrong, and we're going to stop it, and here's how we're going to deal with our situation."

But I think what we need to see is the positive and the negative, but it is unrealistic to expect that we can get where we need to go if the major entertainment media are not involved. They have to be involved. They have to buy onto this. And they have to understand that in the end, the most successful companies have a big interest in living in a safe society and a good society.

And that's the last thing that I want to say. I think we need a curious blend of commitment to a unifying and integrating vision and one that is individually empowering. The great thing I like about the whole business about the Internet and all these new companies springing out of the minds of these young people who think about things I can't even imagine, is that, in the most immediate sense, it's both individually empowering, and it's bringing us closer together.

The best book I read in the last few months is a book called "Non Zero," by Robert Wright. He wrote another book a few years ago called "The Moral Animal" that was a bestseller. I will oversimplify, at the risk of being criticized by the author, the argument of the book.

He basically offers an historical and semi-scientific analysis to support one of the most eloquent assertions of Martin Luther King, which is that the arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice. And his argument is that, notwithstanding the fact that we had modern society horribly disfigured by the Nazis, that we had modern organizational techniques and military power horribly abused by communist and other totalitarian regimes, that on the whole, if you study human history, as societies grow more complex in their interrelation, and more interdependent both within and beyond their borders, people in positions of authority and citizens at the grassroots level are forced to look constantly for more non-zero sum solutions, hence the title of the book—solutions in which everybody wins. Now, this is—the guy—it's a very interesting book and not naive. I mean, he knows—he acknowledges, even in the most sort of cooperative societies, you've got an election. One person wins the

Presidency; the other one doesn't. One person gets to be head of AOL; somebody doesn't. Choices get made all the time.

But the argument of the book is far more sophisticated. It is that to succeed, even in positions of leadership, where there is a competition for the position, the measure of success is not so much whether you got what you want at somebody else's expense, but whether you got what you wanted because you enabled other people to achieve their dreams and to do what they want.

And I guess one of the things that bothers me about so much of the rhetoric I hear about young people today, especially when they do things they shouldn't do, and they grow up in disconnected ways—and you don't have to be poor to grow up in an isolated, disconnected way, as we've seen in Columbine and other places—is that it is—yes, it's important to tell these kids what they shouldn't do, but it's also much more important, on a consistent, loving, disciplined way over a long period of time, to give them lots of things to say yes to.

And I think the idea that we are moving toward a world where more and more, we will find our own victories in other people's victories, because our interdependence forces us to seek non-zero sum solutions, is a very helpful way to think about dealing with most social problems and, frankly, some economic challenges, like global debt relief and things like that.

So I just ask you to think about that. This is a big deal. And I know you can get frustrated in the beginning, because it's amorphous—everything big in the beginning, it makes a difference at the margins, where it makes all the difference is amorphous. But I urge you to stay with this. And if you want me to help after I'm out of office, I'll do that, because I believe in this.

But when you get discouraged, remember: When this Welfare to Work Project started, if anybody had told me that within 4 years, they would have 12,000 companies and hundreds of thousands of people hired, it would have been a hooter. Nobody would have believed it. No one seriously believes when that Teen Pregnancy Partnership met, a lot of them didn't believe in their heart of hearts that if they did this for 4 or 5 years, they

could play the role that they've played in the dropping rates that we've seen.

And I can tell you, nobody in Congress who voted in 1993 to cut the deficit in half really thought that it would spark the avalanche of changed budgetary conditions. I cannot guarantee your success, but I can guarantee you'll be rewarded if you try. And if we think about it in this way, that we're trying to find ways for all of us to live our dreams by empowering more people to live theirs, then I think that the chances of your prevailing are quite high, indeed.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. in the Concorde Room at the Hay Adams Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jeff Bleich, executive director, National Campaign Against Youth Violence; Veronica Coleman, U.S. attorney, Memphis, TN; Ira Lipman, founder and president, Guardsmark; Francine Katz, vice president, consumer education, Anheuser-Busch, Inc.; Robert Silberman, chief executive officer, SFX Entertainment; and fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Steven Case, chairman and chief executive officer, America On-Line.

Proclamation 7338—National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2000 *September 14, 2000*

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

American society today embraces a remarkable breadth of cultures, and Hispanics are an integral part of this diversity. The Hispanic American community is a collage of distinct groups, including people with roots in Central and South America, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Spain. Hispanics have been an important part of the history and heritage of the Americas since the earliest days of European colonization, and today Hispanic Americans are the youngest and fastest-growing minority community in our Nation. Devoted to family, faith, country, and hard work, they bring unique perspectives and experiences to our national community and character.